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While many find it hard to believe, the United States wasn’t always the great country that it is today, in fact there was a great deal of time in our history before we were even our own county. Through determination, strength, willpower, and the thirst for freedom we were able to overcome everything, set up our own government where we unanimously elected the man many believed had led us to our freedom, our first president; George Washington. While we were untrusting of many, we all left all of our fates in this one man’s hands. He had a great presidency and has become a role model for all that followed in his footsteps, but during his two terms, while he had many highs and great accomplishments, he also had some lows.

George Washington was inaugurated the first time on April 30, 1789 in the nation’s capital at the time, New York City, New York. His vice president was John Adams, who later followed Washington; becoming president, but that’s another story for another time. Many viewed Washington as a man that could do no wrong, who always made the right decisions, but, as many would expect today, being the first president was defiantly no walk in the park. There were no rules to follow, nothing to look back on for big decisions. Every little move he made became a precedent that presidents follow behind to this day.

One of the first precedents he set was how others would address him. John Adams was in favor of “His Highness the President of the United States”, though this sounded very familiar to the way someone would address a king, and a king was something no one wanted, so it was decided the from now on they established the president would be known as “Mr. President”. While simple, the title carried power and authority.

During the summer of 1789, Congress set up three departments in the executive branch: the State Department, headed by Secretary Thomas Jefferson, would handle relations with foreign countries; the Treasury Department, led by Secretary Alexander Hamilton, was assigned the task of handling financial matters; and the War department, which was appointed to Secretary Henry Knox, would provide for the nation’s defense. The tree secretaries, along with Attorney general Edmund Randolph, were known as the cabinet, something that still exists today and many historians argue was the best this country has seen.

While it was stated in the Constitution that the Congress could create and appoint new departments, it was never said who was in charge of them; the Congress or the President, seeing that they were in the executive branch. The matter was put to a vote by the Senate. The voting was split right down the middle, leaving Vice President Adams to break the tie. He voted in favor of the President residing over the departments, establishing further the President’s authority over the executive branch.

During Washington’s time, the first conflicts of many with the Native Americans began. Native Americans who lived between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River denied any and all authority that the U. S. government claimed to have over them. On many occasions they would turn to Britain and Spain, both of whom were happy to oblige. Neither country wanted any American settlement in the west. Wanting to avoid any conflict with either country, Washington began to sign treaties with Native American tribes promising them land. The Native Americans were content, but the American settlers ignored the treaties, building on the promised land and eventually starting conflicts.

Now unable to stop some form of conflict, Washington sent out an army under the command of General Arthur St. Clair to restore the western territory. In November of 1791, St. Clair and his army were defeated by Little Turtle, the chief of the Miami people. More than 600 soldiers died in that battle by the Wabash River. Many Americans believed that an alliance with the French would increase their chances of success. The possibility of French involvement caused the British to make a bold move in hopes of winning the west. The British urged the Native Americans to begin destroying American settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains. They also began construction on a new fort in Ohio.

Finally, after a Revolutionary War general, General Anthony Wayne, was sent out, in August 1794, over 1,000 Native Americans were defeated at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. This battle crushed the Native Americans hopes of keeping their land. In the Treaty of Greenville, formed in 1795, the Native Americans surrendered most of their land in present day Ohio.

Hoping to start up the economy, Secretary Hamilton had imposed a tax on Whiskey in the 1790’s. This enraged many Southerners because of the large economy for Whiskey and their strong dependency on it. Many farmers were so enraged that when federal officers who came to collect the tax, they armed themselves with swords, gun, and pitchforks, attacked the officers, and burned down buildings. George Washington sent out an army to calm down the settlers. The army won without any effort. This act showed how while the American people were entitled to their free speech, the government would take action if their protests turned violent. I think that this showed the authority of the government and commanded the respect that they deserved from the American people.

In 1789, shortly after Washington’s inauguration, the French Revolution began to take place. Many Americans were rooting for them, seeing as they had their own revolution not too long before. Before too long though, the revolution turned bloody. The two opposing side, Britain and France, both wanted support of the United States. For fear of causing trouble long term, Washing issued a Proclamation of Neutrality forbidding any U. S. citizens to fight in the war; it also banned both British and French ships from American ports.

After American ships being seized by the British and Americans joining the French cause, Washington made one last effort for peace. He created a treaty known as Jay’s Treaty, in which the British agreed to leave American soil, repay the damages to ships that they had seized, and to repay the colonial debt before 1776. Despite the good that the treaty brought, many American citizens were unhappy with it because it did not deal with impressment or the British interference with American trade.

After Jay’s Treaty was made, Spanish leaders began to worry that the United States and Great Britain would work together in order to overthrow the Spanish Empire in North America. Thomas Pinckney was sent over to Spain to try and settle the two countries differences. In 1795 Pinckney’s Treaty gave the American citizens the right to free navigation of the Mississippi River and the right to trade in New Orleans, giving America the opportunity to expand their economy and, eventually, territory.

Probably Washington’s greatest achievement, in all of his eight years as president, was leaving. Even though many were still trusting in his leadership and would be happy to vote for him for another term, Washington was starting to feel the signs of age, being 64, and decided to retire back to Mt. Vernon, without coming back this time. His leaving after two terms set the precedent that presidents followed for years to come. In his farewell speech he gave wonderful advice to the American people, advice that we never followed. He attacked the evil of political parties that were just starting to form, political parties that stayed around hundreds of years after his death and still exist today. He also warned us of permanent alliances, something else we failed to follow.

George Washington was the greatest, if not one of the greatest, presidents of all time. He brought America through times of rebellion and war, addressing every issue in the best way he saw, all without the guidelines that every single president had after him. He set precedents that were followed for hundreds of years, many still are followed today. He, like all of the others that followed him had his highs, and lows, but even through everything that happened, he still maintained the respect and authority, needed to lead this great country, that all expect of a man as important as him.